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Breaking news and must-read stories

by Doug Stanglin

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May 07, 2012

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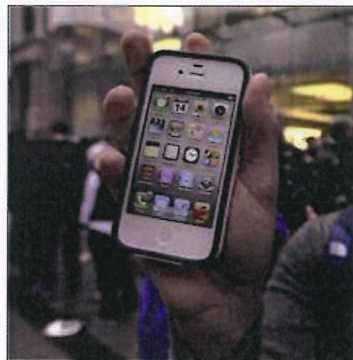
By Natalie DiBlasio, USA
TODAYUpdated 2012-05-07 10:56
AMDid "sexting" just get safer?
Maybe, but probably not.

A free and increasingly popular iPhone app called Snapchat allows users to take a picture, send it and control how the message is visible – between 1 and 10 seconds.

After that, the picture disappears and if the recipient tries to use an iPhone feature that captures an image of whatever is on the screen, the sender is notified, *The New York Times* reports.

The *Times* asked Michael Fertik, chief executive of [Reputation.com](#), an online reputation management service, whether people could feel secure on Snapchat. He says it adds hurdles for those who want to breach the confidentiality of an image exchange.

"We know that friction is a very powerful tool to deter people from taking things that are meant to be private and sharing them," Fertik said. "It's probably impossible to completely deter people, but adding friction in a second-to-second environment — like sexting — can be very powerful."



CAPTION

By Steven Senne, AP

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About Doug Stanglin

Doug is an unrepentant news junkie who loves breaking news and has been known to watch C-SPAN even on vacation. He has covered a wide range of domestic and international news stories, from prison riots in Oklahoma to the Moscow coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. Doug previously served as foreign editor at USA TODAY. [More about Doug](#)



About Michael Winter

Michael Winter has been a daily contributor to On Deadline since its debut in January 2006. His journalism career began in the prehistoric Ink Era, and he was an early adapter at the dawn of the Digital Age. His varied experience includes editing at the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

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TO DECLARATION OF
WILLIAM LIVINGSTON

Although the app's description in the Apple App Store does not mention "sexting," Apple has designated the app as being for users 12 and older, warning of "mild sexual content or nudity."

According to a study by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project that is due out later this year, 6% of adult Americans admit to having sent a "sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo or video" using a cellphone. Another 15% have received such material. Three percent of teens admit to sending sexually explicit content, the *Times* reported.

Even if a Snapchat image is set to vanish after a few seconds, there's nothing to stop someone from taking a photograph of his smartphone screen with another camera, the newspaper reported.

The app is currently available only for the iPhone, but multiple posts on the Snapchat Facebook page request a development for Android phones.

Shapshot itself doesn't guarantee the security of sent photos.

The app's privacy policy states that although it attempts "to delete image data as soon as possible after the message is transmitted, we cannot guarantee that the message data will be deleted in every case. Consequently, we are not able to guarantee that your messaging data will be deleted in all instances. Messages, therefore, are sent at the risk of the user."

Snapchat isn't the first app to help people do things they probably shouldn't on a smartphone, the *Times* reported. After Tiger Woods' texting scandal, a company called Tigertext created an app that allows users to recall messages and set them to self-destruct.

When asked about sexting among teenagers, Amanda Lenhart, senior research specialist with the Pew Research Center, said to the *Times*: "What motivates teens is what motivates anyone who does this: You want to be in a relationship, you want to be desired, you want to be cool, or wild." She added: "Solving the problem is always a bit of an arms race; we have technology that allows us to do something, then we have to create the technology to help protect us."

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Posting as Bill Livingston (Not you?)

**Erik Crudele** · ★ Top Commenter

If you are worried who might see the picture, DON'T SEND IT!!!

Reply · 6 · Like · Follow Post · May 7, 2012 at 10:43am



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**Paul Rossi** · Westport, New York

reminds me of the joke, why do people have sex lying down? So the puritans won't think that they're dancing.... how about if all this time, energy, money and brainpower were spent on some of our more important social issues?

Reply · 1 · Like · Follow Post · May 7, 2012 at 11:11am



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**Ryan McKee** · Follow ✓ Following · 24 years old

I find it hard to believe that only 6% of people have sent a nude/sexual picture. When it all boils down to it though, half the world has a penis and half the world has a vagina. Why is it such a big deal to see another persons?

Reply · 1 · Like · Follow Post · May 7, 2012 at 11:05am

**Shandra Jackson-Bohley** · ★ Top Commenter

I totally agree with you Ryan. I must be getting old but I do not see the appeal of sending or receiving a "dirty or naked" pic of myself. It's like the line in Kindergarten Cop " boys have penises, girls have a vagina". A picture just doesn't do it for me.

Reply · Like · May 7, 2012 at 11:51am

**Iam Freedom** · Follow ✓ Following · ★ Top Commenter · Anti-propaganda squad at The American People

Everyone has their ways to get off.

Reply · Like · May 7, 2012 at 12:10pm

**Ryan McKee** · Follow ✓ Following · 24 years old

Shandra Jackson-Bohley I didnt meant that I dont understand why people like it, I meant I dont understand why people think it is such a big deal that people do it and like it.

Reply · Like · May 7, 2012 at 1:33pm

Demand for photo-erasing iPhone app heats up sexting debate



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